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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/816,777	04/02/2004	Paul A. Vaughan	85689.17	2775

24347 7590 09/29/2005

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DALLAS, TX 75201

EXAMINER

LEWIS, RALPH A

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3732

DATE MAILED: 09/29/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/816,777

Applicant(s)

VAUGHAN, PAUL A.

Examiner

Ralph A. Lewis

Art Unit

3732

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 15 October 2004 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____ |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ____ |

Obvious-type Double Patenting Rejections

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 1-14 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-20 of U.S. Patent No. 6,899,714. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because one of ordinary skill in the art would have found the present claims obvious in view of the previously patented claims.

Rejections based on Prior Art

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Cotrel (US 5,005,562).

In Figure 9 Cotrel discloses a vertebral stabilization assembly comprised of a first vertebral screw 21 (lower) for threaded engagement with a first vertebra 10, a first connecting screw 8 received by the engaging portion of first vertebral screw 21, a second vertebral screw 21 (upper) for threaded engagement with a second vertebra 10, a second connecting screw 8 received by the engaging portion of second vertebral screw 21, and a connecting member 3 operable to connect with the first and second connecting screws 8. In regard to the functional limitation that the "first connecting screw [is] positionable in the first vertebra," it is noted that the Cotrel connecting screws 8 are capable of being positioned within the vertebrae if the vertebral screws are positioned to such a depth. In regard to claims 2-6 and 10, the Cotrel device is capable of being positioned from an anterior side. The intended use limitations fail to impose any objectively ascertainable structural distinctions from the device disclosed by Cotrel.

It is noted that there are significant structural distinctions between how applicant's disclosed vertebral screws engage the connecting screws from that disclosed by Cotrel (i.e. the connect transversely rather than axially). Applicant is encouraged to focus on the structural distinctions rather than distinctions in how applicant intends for his device to be used.

Claims 1-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Steffee (US 4,611,581).

Steffee discloses a first and second vertebral screws 122 having engaging portions 132, connecting screws 152 and connection member 30. The manner in which applicant intends for the claimed device to be used fails to impose any objectively ascertainable structural distinctions from the device disclosed by Steffee.

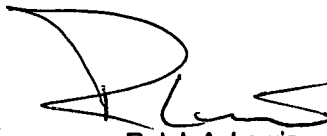
Prior Art

Applicant's information disclosure statements of July 06, 2004, August 22, 2005 and October 15, 2004 have been considered and an initialed copy enclosed herewith.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Any inquiry concerning this communication should be directed to **Ralph Lewis** at telephone number **(571) 272-4712**. Fax (571) 273-8000. The examiner works a compressed work schedule and is unavailable every other Friday. The examiner's supervisor, Kevin Shaver, can be reached at (571) 272-4720.

R. Lewis
September 22, 2005



Ralph A. Lewis
Primary Examiner
Au3732